

**Working group III: Improving links between VET and the labour market: meeting the demand for skills**

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**Presentations:** **Anticipating skills for European recovery**  
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**Forward looking studies on employment, occupations and qualifications in France: tools, users networks and transfers into practice**

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Europe is facing several critical challenges such as the recent economic downturn, global competition, climate change, technological progress, structural changes and demographic trends which also accelerate the pace of change in the labour market and skills needed. These challenges require a constructive, systemic policy response. Vocational education and training (VET) can play a fundamental role by providing European citizens with the skills, knowledge and competence needed in the labour market; consequently, it can make a considerable contribution to economic growth, productivity and competitiveness.

The skills of Europe's workforce are of vital importance to Europe's economic recovery from the present crisis. This has been confirmed by national recovery plans. The *New Skills for New Jobs* initiative, recently launched by the European Commission in response to the European Council, also confirms that skills development is critically important for Europe's short-term recovery, but also for its longer-term growth and productivity. Education, training and employment policies should focus on increasing and adapting skills and providing better learning opportunities: in this way, they will be able to respond adequately to emerging economic structures and to ensure that Europe has the right skills to fill the jobs that will be created in the future. For instance, mitigation and adaptation efforts for climate change can help create a new economic reality: they can generate new occupations, new skills, a changing character of all occupations and as such, may require an enormous need for re-training.

To make sure that VET responds to the changing need for skills, one of the key priorities of the *Bordeaux Communiqué* is the forging of better links between VET and the labour market. To this end, forward-planning mechanisms can be developed that focus on jobs and skills at national and European level, identify potential skill gaps and shortages and respond to the future skill needs of the economy and enterprises, and make sure that social partners and economic stakeholders are properly involved in defining and implementing VET policies.

This working session will try to answer the following questions:

- What are the trends for jobs and skills in Europe? How could the current economic crisis affect future employment and skill needs?
- How could partnerships and cooperation with stakeholders (mainly social partners and regional actors) help to meet the demand for skills?
- To meet the demand for skills, what would be the ideal cooperation between VET and the labour market?